



SAFETY --- Network

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Unbuckled motorists, drunk drivers beware!

*Summer safety is top priority
for Michigan law enforcement*

Michigan law enforcement agencies will embark on a new and ambitious program to make this the safest summer on record by increasing traffic patrols throughout the summer to strictly enforce safety belt and drunk driving laws. The enhanced traffic enforcement effort is being supported by federal traffic safety funds and will allow police agencies to increase traffic patrols while at the same time maintain the same level of service to their communities.

The summer is being targeted as traffic fatalities are typically highest during these three months. Law enforcement agencies will be putting additional traffic patrols out all summer to remind motorists that safety belts and sober driving are in the forecast.

More than five hundred Michigan law enforcement agencies are expected to take part, with 53 counties receiving federal traffic safety dollars for over-time enforcement.

The efforts kickoff with the Memorial Day holiday *Click It or Ticket. Buckle Up or Pay Up* safety belt mobilization, May 23-June 5.

Last year, Michigan's safety belt use sizzled, topping 90 percent for the first time. That means more motorists than ever are using these life-saving devices.

Expect to see "Safety Belt Enforce-

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Michigan traffic deaths show marked decline in 2004

Michigan experienced a nearly 10 percent drop in traffic deaths in 2004, with 124 fewer persons dying on the state's roadways, according to just-released information from the Michigan State Police Criminal Justice Information Center (CJIC).

The number of traffic deaths fell from 1,283 in 2003 to 1,159 in 2004, the lowest figure since 1945. This drop in traffic deaths represents an economic savings of more than \$133 million.

"The bottom line is that fewer citizens are dying in traffic accidents and that's good news," said Governor Jennifer M. Granholm. "Michigan's law enforcement family works hard every-day to protect Michigan's families at home and on the road."

Injuries also dropped approximately 5.5 percent, from 105,555 in 2003 to 99,680 in 2004.

CJIC estimates the fatality rate fell from 2003 at 1.31 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled to 1.16 in 2004.

"While an in-depth analysis will be necessary to precisely pinpoint the reasons behind this remarkable drop in traffic deaths, it is likely this decline is at

least partially linked to a dramatic increase in safety belt use," said Col.

Tadarial J. Sturdivant, director of the Michigan State Police. "This is also the first full year under the state's tougher drunk driving law, which may also have contributed to this decline."

In 2004, Michigan became only the sixth state to reach a safety belt use rate of at least 90 percent. Additionally, 2004 was also the first full year in which the legal definition of drunk driving was set at .08 blood-alcohol content. This change was effective in fall 2003.

The state likewise

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Bucklebear taught preschoolers at Lansing Community College Head Start about the importance of buckling up. See page 10 for the full story.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

MICHAEL L. PRINCE

Division Director, Office of Highway Safety Planning

A summer of fun, sun, and traffic safety

Stepped up traffic enforcement seeks to reduce summertime roadway deaths

Last year law enforcement agencies, governmental entities, businesses, associations, and others united to help Michigan reach its 90 percent safety belt goal.



Congratulations and thank you to all the people out there who believed it could happen in Michigan. Thank you to the people who shared stories of personal tragedies. Thank you to those who participated in news conferences, or who worked in bad weather enforcing the law.

Let's not also forget that we have the power to do even more. We've proven that our state has what it takes to put in place effective traffic safety programs. Anyone who knows the traffic safety community in Michigan knows they're never satisfied with good because they can always do better. And better means more lives saved, more serious injuries prevented.

The Office of Highway Safety Planning has big plans for this summer. We want to make this the safest summer on record. We want to reduce traffic deaths at a time when increased travel puts more people at risk.

Michigan law enforcement agencies will embark on a new and ambitious program to save lives this summer by increasing traffic patrols throughout the three-month

period to strictly enforce safety belt and drunk driving laws. The enhanced traffic enforcement effort is being supported by federal traffic safety funds in 53 counties and will allow police agencies to increase traffic patrols while at the same time maintain the same level of service to their communities.

This stepped up enforcement has one goal in mind – preventing traffic deaths and serious injuries. While 13 may sound unlucky to some, OHSP has set its sights on this number. By focusing on safety belt and drunk driving enforcement, OHSP hopes to reduce traffic deaths by 13, an average of one person every week of the summer. That equates to a nearly 5 percent reduction in summertime traffic deaths from 2003.

Ideally, motorists would always be safe and responsible behind the wheel. In a perfect world drivers would pay attention to traffic around them, obey posted speed limits and traffic signals, adjust their driving and speed for inclement weather, and drive while rested, refreshed, and sober.

Unfortunately that's not always the case. We're sometimes called upon to watch for the mistakes of others on the road, to anticipate the unanticipated, and always be prepared.

The best things you can do for yourself and others – buckle up and drive sober.

So whether people are traveling on holiday weekends or enjoying a mid-summer respite, make traffic safety part of all travel plans.

Just as statewide support was

needed to achieve last year's goal of 90 percent safety belt use, assistance is needed to make this the safest summer on record. You can help OHSP with this campaign by hanging a traffic safety banner or a poster in a prominent place; passing out flyers with safety belt and drunk driving messages; include a traffic safety article in newsletters, local publications or employee communications; or utilize a business or school marquee to remind the community to buckle up and/or drive sober.

Other options include conducting a child passenger safety seat check or a local safety belt use survey and publicizing the results; hanging a *Click It or Ticket* parking lot sign; or affixing a *Click It or Ticket* bumper sticker to government or fleet vehicles.

For a complete list of materials available to help promote summer traffic safety, visit the OHSP website at www.michigan.gov/ohsp.

Let's make 2005 the summer of fun and safety. Let's make this the safest summer in Michigan history.

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Buckled Up in Kalamazoo

The Consumer's Energy Kalamazoo Service Center joint natural gas and electric safety committee has received recognition from the Great Lakes Region of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for achieving a 96 percent safety belt usage rate among staff.

Pictured are: (front row, left to right) Greg Woods, Lynn Kasper, Scott Bartholomew, and Dan Vartanian of the Office of Highway Safety Planning, (back row) joint safety committee members Dee Bigelow, Bruce Berow, Pete Pryson, and Joe Malikowski.

New procedure for ordering free traffic safety materials

The Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning has moved its traffic safety materials to the Michigan State Police, Management Services Division.

Materials can be ordered by fax at (517) 336-2663 or at trafficsafety@michigan.gov.

An order form and listing of available traffic safety materials are available at www.michigan.gov/ohsp under Traffic Safety Materials. No walk-in orders will be accepted. For more information, please contact Lynn Sutfin at (517) 333-5754.

OHSP has also moved its video loan library and Crash Test Dummies Vince and Larry costumes in-house.

Vince and Larry are ready for loan

OHSP currently has one set of the Vince and Larry costumes available for loan. These costumes are available to law enforcement and other agencies for special events in their communities. There is no charge for utilizing these costumes; however, borrowers are responsible for shipping the costumes back to OHSP.

A complete listing of agencies with Vince and Larry costumes available for loan can be found at www.michigan.gov/ohsp in the Traffic Safety Materials section.

For more information on borrowing the Vince and Larry costumes, please contact Elaine Keilen or Diane Burton at (517) 333-5325. They are available on a first come, first serve basis.

Traffic safety videos available at OHSP

The Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) has a variety of traffic safety videos available for loan. A complete listing of these videos is available on OHSP's website at www.michigan.gov/ohsp in the Traffic Safety Materials section.

For more information, or to borrow a video, please contact Elaine Keilen or Diane Burton at (517) 333-5325.

Unbuckled motorists, drunk drivers beware!

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ment Zones" from Monroe to Marquette and St. Clair to St. Joseph.

Michigan law requires all front seat passengers to buckle up. Those under 16 must also buckle up, regardless of whether they are in the front or rear seating positions. And, babies and toddlers under age 4 must be in an approved child safety seat.

Summer will conclude with a major drunk driving crackdown that ends with the Labor Day holiday, August 19 – September 5. Drunk drivers can expect overnight accommodations ... at the nearest jail.



Safecar.gov website devoted to vehicle safety information

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has launched a new website devoted entirely to vehicle safety.

The new site provides valuable information to consumers, including equipment and safety information, crash test and roll over ratings, and allows consumers to file a complaint on vehicle defects to the agency.

For more information, visit www.safecar.gov.

2004 GTSAC traffic safety award winners named

Seven traffic safety and two long-term awards were presented at the Governor's Traffic Safety Advisory Commission (GTSAC) banquet March 2. Each year the commission honors organizations, programs and individuals for outstanding contributions to traffic safety. The awards luncheon was part of the 10th Annual Michigan Traffic Safety Summit.

2004 Outstanding Contributions to Traffic Safety Awards

AAA Michigan – To improve intersection safety in Michigan, AAA Michigan developed the Road Improvement Demonstration Program. AAA Michigan works directly with government road agencies to make low-cost road-safety improvements to intersections – typically to traffic signals, pavement markings and signs. AAA Michigan invested more than \$2 million for safety improvements at nearly 400 high-crash intersections in Detroit and Grand Rapids.



GTSAC Chair Robert Morris and Jeffrey S. Bagdade of AAA Michigan.

Crash Process Redesign Project (CPR) – The state collects traffic crash data from approximately 700 law enforcement agencies which is then used by state and local planning, transportation and law enforcement agencies. The data collection system was outdated and could only provide limited reports. The CPR resulted in a new web-based application that increased the speed and accuracy of data collection and allows users direct access to crash location information. Reports that used to take days or even weeks to get can now be found in just minutes from a desktop computer. The project was a collaborative effort involving the Michigan State Police, the Michigan Department of Technology, the Michigan Department of Transportation, and the Michigan Department of State.



GTSAC Chair Robert Morris and Diane Sherman of the Michigan State Police, Criminal Justice Information Center.

Sergeant Steven Spink, Michigan State Police – In April 2004, it was discovered school bus drivers were being trained to pull as far to the right as possible on the highway and stop traffic on all or part of the roadway. Although this offered maximum protection for students getting off the bus and crossing the road, it violated the Michigan Vehicle Code. Following this discovery, Sergeant Steven Spink of the Traffic Services Section researched the law and its safety implications and presented draft legislation to resolve the issue at a June Pupil Transportation Advisory Committee meeting. This legislation was quickly signed into law by July 2004, making this procedure legal.



GTSAC Chair Robert Morris and Michigan State Police Sergeant Steven Spink.

The Greater Flint SAFE KIDS Coalition

Buckle Up Team – To prevent the injury or death of children in the Flint area, the Greater Flint SAFE KIDS Coalition Buckle Up Team insures child safety seats are installed and used correctly. The team consists of 37 certified child safety seat inspection technicians. The group finds nearly 97 percent of seats are installed incorrectly. In 2004, the Team opened four permanent inspection sites and conducted 38 child safety seat inspection events. The Buckle Up Team also provided 620 free car and booster seats to parents in need.



GTSAC Chair Robert Morris and Carmen Cramer of the Greater Flint SAFE KIDS Coalition.

The Kalamazoo SAFE KIDS Coalition Child Passenger Safety Enhancement Program – To prevent the injury or death of children in the Kalamazoo area, the Kalamazoo SAFE KIDS Coalition Child Passenger Safety Enhancement Program insures



GTSAC Chair Robert Morris and Deb Carpenter of the Kalamazoo SAFE KIDS Coalition.

GTSAC winners

Continued from page 4

child safety seats are installed and used correctly. In 2004, the coalition opened four permanent child passenger safety inspection stations. This program resulted in the inspection of more than 500 child safety seats and more than 300 families receiving free car seats in 2004.

Michigan State Police Petoskey Post – The Michigan State Police Petoskey Post was honored for its Education and Prevention of Impaired Crashes (EPIC) program. EPIC addresses the problems caused by underage drinking and impaired driving through classroom lectures, police video of alcohol-related crash scenes, the use of Fatal Vision Goggles which simulate the effects of alcohol, and sobriety testing. Students have the opportunity to drive a special vehicle similar to a golf cart through a simple course of cones while “under the influence” of the goggles. The students discover the difficulty of negotiating the course and experience how drinking affects driving judgment firsthand.



Pictured are (l. to r.) Petoskey Rotary Club President Ken Mainland, GTSAC Chair Robert Morris, Sergeant Brett Gooding, Trooper John Ferguson, and First Lieutenant Aaron Sweeney, all of the Michigan State Police.

Southwest Michigan Safe Communities Steering Committee of Van Buren County – A Super Bowl Seat Belt Challenge earned the Southwest Michigan Safe Communities Steering Committee of Van Buren County accolades. Employing competition, the challenge increased safety belt use among 11 Van Buren County high schools. After the challenge was issued,



Pictured are (l. to r.) Lieutenant Bill Lux of the VanBuren County Sheriff's Office, Larry Hummel of the VanBuren County Road Commission, GTSAC Chair Robert Morris, Michigan State Police Sergeant James Campbell, and Jeff Mitchell of the VanBuren County Road Commission.

local law enforcement conducted safety belt enforcement at each school, issuing citations to any student or teacher not belted. A few weeks later, officers returned to the school and handed out food coupons to students who were wearing their safety belts. Following the challenge, overall safety belt usage at the 11 schools went up by 2.4 percent, from 85.1 percent to 87.5 percent.

Richard H. Austin Long-Term Award

The Richard H. Austin Long-Term Traffic Safety Award is presented to individuals or organizations who have made significant long-term contributions to the field of traffic safety.

Beverly Ward – For nearly 17 years, Beverly Ward has been on a quest to improve traffic safety in Jackson, Hillsdale and Lenewee counties. A former elementary school principal who spent 32 years educating children, Ward now educates the residents of these counties about the importance of buckling up and driving sober. In 1988, she left teaching to become the director of the Jackson Traffic Safety Program and later became the traffic safety coordinator for the Region 2 Planning Commission. She also serves as treasurer and coordinator of the victim impact panel for the Jackson County MADD chapter as well as a representative to the state MADD chapter.



Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land and Beverly Ward

Frank Fitzgerald – Representative Frank M. Fitzgerald's commitment to traffic safety issues has contributed to long-term positive changes in Michigan's traffic death rate. Fitzgerald, who died unexpectedly in December, 2004, was posthumously awarded the long-term traffic safety award. The former Eaton County Republican served six terms in the Michigan House of Representatives. During that time, Fitzgerald was an advocate for graduated licensing of teen drivers, primary enforcement of safety belt laws, and stronger penalties for repeat drunk driving offenders. Another of his notable traffic safety accomplishments was his sponsorship of the zero alcohol tolerance law for drivers under the legal drinking age.



Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land and Ruth Fitzgerald, accepting on behalf of her late husband, Frank Fitzgerald.

22 law enforcement agencies honored for traffic safety initiatives

Five agencies win Commercial Vehicle Safety Award

Twenty-two Michigan law enforcement agencies earned the 2004 Award for Excellence in Traffic Safety from the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police (MACP), the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) and AAA Michigan. Awards were presented February 3 at the MACP Winter Conference in Grand Rapids.

The award recognizes the outstanding commitment the winning law enforcement agencies have made in the previous year to overall traffic safety. There are six categories (small to large) for local law enforcement agencies and one each for county sheriff offices and state police posts.

The 2004 award winners were

- Class 1: Augusta Police Department, Sandusky Police Department, Waterloo Township Police Department
- Class 2: Dowagiac Police Department, Ludington Police Department, Manistee Police Department
- Class 3: Grosse Ile Police Department, Farmington Department of Public Safety, Three Rivers Police



- Department
- Class 4: Grand Haven Department of Public Safety, Norton Shores Police Department, Plymouth Township Police Department
- Class 5: Kentwood Police Department, Midland Police Department, West Bloomfield Police Department
- Class 6: Battle Creek Police Department
- Sheriff's Departments: Ingham County, Muskegon County, Manistee County
- Michigan State Police: Bay City Post, Fifth District Headquarters, and Newberry Post.

First place agencies received a \$4,000 grant for traffic safety equipment, overtime or training. A new feature in this year's award program was the addition of \$1,000 grant awards provided by OHSP to the

second and third place agencies in each category.

Programs are judged on four components: the scope and duration of the project; the complexity or difficulty of the project; the degree of innovation involved; and the results achieved.

In addition, five agencies were presented the MACP Award for Excellence in Commercial Vehicle Safety. This award is co-sponsored by the Michigan Truck Safety Commission and the Michigan State Police Motor Carrier Division. Winners each received a \$6,000 equipment grant.

Winners were: Pinckney Police Department, Huron Township Police Department, Dearborn Police Department, Oakland County Sheriff's Department, Michigan State Police Adrian Post.

Michigan traffic deaths decline in 2004

Continued from page 1

experienced a more than 5 percent decline in traffic deaths involving alcohol and/or drugs, falling from 442 deaths in 2003 to 418 in 2004 – representing 36.1 percent of all traffic deaths. In addition, drunk driving arrests fell slightly, from 55,728 in 2003 to 55,056 in 2004.

The crash data also shows:

- Deer crashes fell more than 7 percent, from 67,760 in 2003 to 62,707 in 2004. This included three fatalities and 1,647 injuries in 2004.
- The number of crashes involving young drivers (ages 16 – 20) fell slightly from 52,215 in 2003 to

50,085 in 2004.

- Pedestrian crashes dropped from 2,953 in 2003 to 2,724 in 2004. The number of pedestrians killed also fell, from 169 pedestrians killed in 2003 to 141 in 2004.
- A 4 percent increase was noted in motorcycle crashes, from 3,187 in 2003 to 3,321 in 2004 (79 motorcyclists killed and 2,803 injured). The number of registered motorcycles in Michigan also continued to increase.

The Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) will release a comprehensive report on traffic crashes in the fall.

What's Ahead

April

April 30 – May 7 – National SAFE Kids Week

May

National Bike Month
Motorcycle Awareness Month
May 15–21 EMS Week
May 15–21 National Transportation Week
May 23–30 Buckle Up America Week
May 23 – June 5 *Click It or Ticket* safety belt mobilization

State's alcohol and motorcycle programs receive high marks

The Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) recently took an in-depth look into two of its program areas – alcohol and motorcycle – to see where it is successful and where challenges lie.

The week-long assessments were conducted by experts

from across the country in each of the fields. These experts evaluated the programs' management, public information and education, enforcement and adjudication, training, and evaluation.

The assessors created independent reports with recommendations and details about what's working and what's not.

The assessors congratulated Michigan on its high alcohol conviction rate, which is in the high 90 percentile, and called it a leader in the impaired driving field. It urged the state to get more involved in DUI courts and strengthen its ties with the medical community, specifically in the emergency medical services area.

This was the first time Michigan's motorcycle program was assessed. Assessors praised Michigan's helmet law that requires all motorcyclists to wear a helmet. It urged the state to take steps to make other motorists more aware of motorcyclists on the roadways.

For more information about these assessments, or for copies of the full reports, contact Jason Hamblen at (517) 333-5319 or hamblenj@michigan.gov.



MDOT helps celebrate 90 percent safety belt use

In partnership with the Office of Highway Safety Planning, a few key units within the Michigan Department of Transportation created a new safety banner designed to help celebrate Michigan's 90 percent safety belt milestone. Special thanks to MDOT's MITS Center, Mapping and Graphics Unit, and Office of Communications. The banners will be displayed internally at various state agencies and 'out in the field' at safety-related events.

NHTSA reports cell phone use by motorists is on the rise

More motorists than ever are using cellular phones while they drive, according to the latest survey by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

In 2004, at any given daylight moment, an estimated 8 percent of all motorists in the U.S., or about 1.2 million drivers, were using cellular phones (both hand-held and hands-free) while operating their vehicles. This compares to 6 percent in 2002 and 4 percent in 2000.

The survey also estimated that 5 percent of motorists in 2004, or about 800,000 drivers, were using hand-held cellular phones at any given daylight time, compared to 4 percent of drivers in 2002 and 3 percent in 2000.

Other findings:

- Hand-held cellular phone use increased among drivers between the ages of 16 and 24, from 5 percent in 2002 to 8 percent in 2004.

- For all age groups, hand-held cellular phone use increased among female drivers, from 4 percent in 2002 to 6 percent in 2004. Men using hand-held cellular phones remained steady at 4 percent from 2002 to 2004.
- Motorists are more likely to use phones when driving alone. In 2004, 6 percent of drivers traveling alone were holding cellular phones, compared to 2 percent of drivers who had at least one passenger. However, drivers who had at least one child passenger (7 years old or younger) were as likely to use a hand-held cellular phone as were drivers with no children on board (both at 5 percent of observed drivers in 2004).

Complete results of the latest cellular phone observational survey are available at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/RNotes/2005/809847.pdf>.

PAAM offers legal updates and new training course

Three recent cases on traffic safety issues have been published by the Court of Appeals. In the first case, a road rage confrontation led to an ethnic intimidation charge. The defendants and victim exchanged racial epithets over their driving activities. The victim got out of his car and approached the defendants. The defendants beat him up, shouting profanities and racial slurs.

They were charged with assault and ethnic intimidation, but the district court judge refused to bind the case over because he found the assault was motivated by road rage, rather than an intent to assault the victim because he was black. The circuit court judge disagreed, reinstated the ethnic intimidation charge, and the defendants appealed.

Judges Fitzgerald, Schuette and Bandstra affirmed. They held that the ethnic intimidation statute is violated whenever the defendant's specific intent to threaten or assault the victim because of their race occurs before the assault. That racial intent does not have to be the sole motivation for the crime. Accordingly, even if the initial motivation for the assault was road rage, it was clear from the defendants' statements that they intended to beat the victim because of his race. *People v Schutter*, CA No. 257824, March 15, 2005.

The second case stated that a DWLS causing death charge requires proof of causation. The defendant's license was revoked, and he was driving a truck with a snow blade on the front when the victim drove in front of him on a snowmobile. The victim died instantly, and the defendant left the scene. He was charged with DWLS causing death and leaving the scene of a serious

injury accident. The defendant claimed that because his driving did not cause the death, he could not be charged with DWLS causing death. Judges Schuette and Bandstra agreed. They held that *People v Lardie*, 452 Mich 231 (1996) required a finding that the defendant's driving caused the death.

And finally, the court of appeals held that a passenger who grabs and turns the steering wheel is not operating the vehicle. In the case, the defendant was the front seat passenger in a vehicle. He grabbed and turned the steering wheel, causing the vehicle to leave the road and strike a jogger. He was charged with felonious driving. Judges Murray, Markey and O'Connell held that in order to be convicted of felonious driving, a defendant must be the operator of the vehicle. They further held that although the defendant interfered with the operation of the vehicle, he was not in actual physical control of the vehicle because he could not have started or stopped it, increased or decreased its speed, nor use any of its other instruments. Accordingly, they affirmed dismissal of the charges. *People v Yamat*, CA No. 257923, March 24, 2005.

Also of importance is the recent ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court. It held that a dog sniff during a lawful traffic stop does not violate the 4th amendment. The defendant was pulled over for speeding on I-80 in Illinois. When the officer radioed the stop in, another officer working drug interdiction overheard the call and went to the scene of the stop. He arrived with his drug detection dog before the defendant had been issued a ticket, and he led the dog around

the defendant's car. When the dog alerted at the trunk, the trunk was searched and marijuana was found. The entire process from when the motorist was pulled over to the dog sniff took less than ten minutes. The United States Supreme Court held that a dog sniff conducted during a lawful traffic stop that reveals no information other than the location of an illegal substance does not violate the 4th amendment. *Illinois v Caballes*, No. 03-923, January 24, 2005.

Finally, a heads up. The Traffic Safety Training Project at PAAM will be offering a program called Advanced Cops in Court. This one-day seminar will train law-enforcement officers on how to effectively testify in court on traffic safety cases using hands-on work done in a mock-trial setting. The officers will receive suggestions and critiques on how to persuasively testify. The course will be taught by officers and prosecutors with significant courtroom experience. A prerequisite for the course will be attendance at a past PAAM Cops in Court program.

The date is to be determined. For further information on that and other programs contact David Wallace, Traffic Safety Training Attorney, at (517) 334-6060 or email at wallaced@michigan.gov. All courses are also listed on the web at www.paamtrafficsafety.com. Online registration is now available.

Consult your prosecutor before adopting practices suggested by reports in this article. The court decisions in this article are reported to help you keep up with trends in the law. Discuss these statutes and cases with your commanding officers, police legal advisors, and the prosecuting attorney before changing your practices in reliance on a reported court decision or legislative change.



TRIP study: Fatality rate higher on rural roads

While half of traffic fatalities in Michigan between 1999 and 2003 have occurred on rural, non-Interstate roads, vehicle travel on these roads accounted for only a quarter of travel during that period, according to a recent report by The Road Information Program (TRIP), a national nonprofit transportation research group.

The report, "Growing Traffic in Rural America: Safety, Mobility and Economic Challenges in America's Heartland," looks at the condition, use, and safety of the nation's non-Interstate rural roads and highways.

TRIP found that there has been an average of 22,127 traffic fatalities annually on the nation's non-Interstate rural roads between 1999 and 2003, representing 52 percent of traffic fatalities. Only 28 percent of travel occurred on these roads during the same time period.

The study also found:

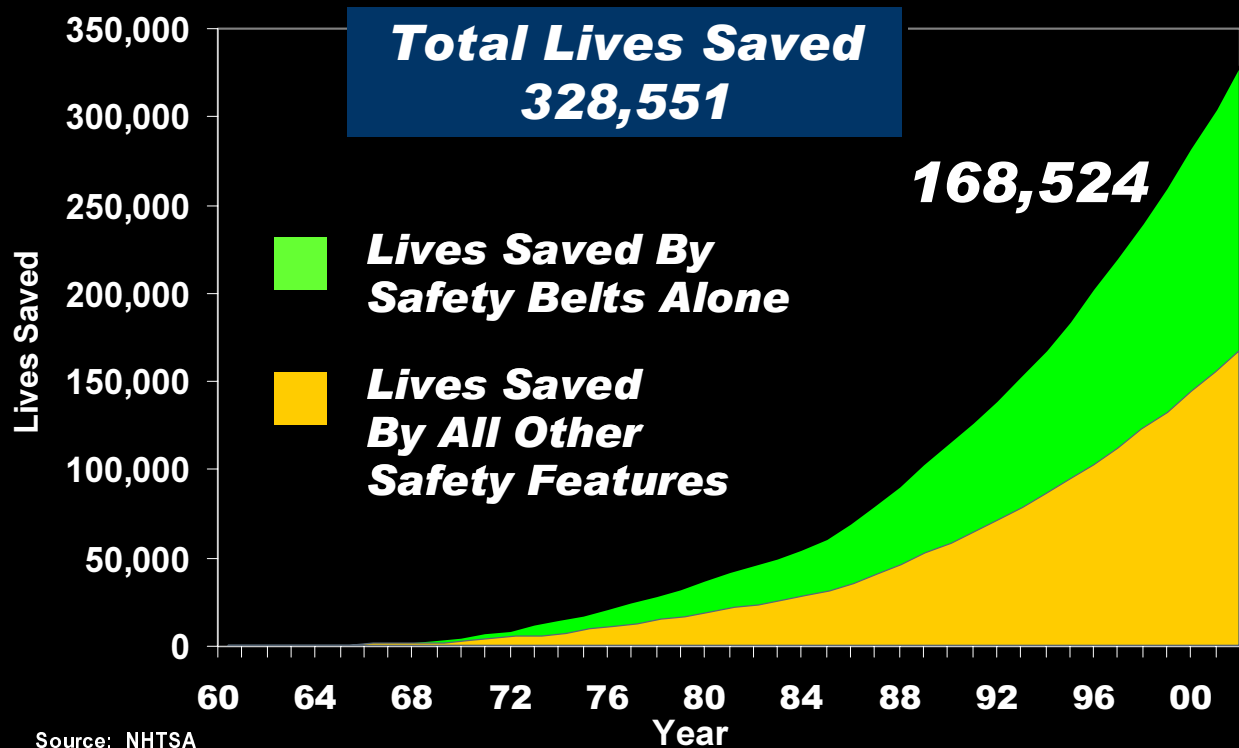
- The traffic fatality rate on non-Interstate rural roads in Michigan in 2003 was 2.37 deaths for every 100

million vehicle miles of travel, compared to a rate of .91 on all other roads.

- The traffic fatality rate on non-Interstate rural roads in the U.S. in 2003 was 2.72 deaths for every 100 million VMT, compared to a rate of .99 on all other roads.
- Rural roads are more likely than urban roads to have two lanes and have roadway design that includes narrow lanes, limited shoulders, sharp curves, exposed hazards, pavement drop-offs, steep slopes and limited clear zones along roadsides.
- Most head-on crashes on rural, non-Interstate roads are likely caused by a motorist making an unintentional maneuver as a result of driver fatigue, being distracted or driving too fast in a curve.
- Travel on rural roads increased by 27 percent between 1990 and 2002 by all vehicles and by 32 percent by large commercial trucks.

For more information about the report, visit www.tripnet.org.

Lives Saved by Safety Technologies 1960 - 2002



OHSP and Bucklebear teach preschoolers about buckling up

On Valentine's Day, parents were urged to show their love for their little ones by making sure they were always properly restrained in motor vehicles.

As part of National Child Passenger Safety Week, Feb. 13–19, the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) hosted a news event at the Lansing Community College Head Start.

Parents of Head Start preschoolers were invited to join their children during a "Bucklebear" program designed to teach preschoolers about passenger safety.

Afterward, all parents received information about child passenger safety and a free booster seat. Those in need of child safety seats were given a coupon to redeem with the local Safe Kids chapter.

Motor vehicle crashes are the No. 1 killer of children ages 2 to 14, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Nationally, 483 children younger than 5 years old and 417 children age 5 to 9 were killed. In Michigan during 2003, 29 children 9 years old or younger were killed and 2,957 were injured in traffic crashes, according to the Michigan State Police, Criminal Justice Information Center.

Child safety seats reduce the risk of death by 71 percent for infants (younger than 1 year old) and by 54 percent for toddlers (age 1–4) in passenger cars, according to NHTSA. Children ages 4–8 who use booster seats and safety belts are 59 percent less likely to be injured in a car crash than children who are restrained only by a safety belt.



Preschoolers at the Lansing Community College Head Start buckle up during a special presentation during national Child Passenger Safety Week.

Many people believe that children who have out-grown child safety seats should go straight to wearing safety belts. But safety belts, which are designed for adults, won't fully restrain many children in a crash. Those children need a booster seat, which lifts the child so the safety belt properly fits—and protects—them. NHTSA recommends booster seats for children from about age 4 and 40 pounds to at least age 8, unless the child is 4'9".

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